Union Calendar No. 962

95th Congress, 2d Session - - - - - - House Report No. 95-1828, Part 2

REPORT

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MARCH 29, 1979.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

---

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

43-112 O WASHINGTON : 1979

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402
Stock No. 052-071-00590-1

(1) *Oswald in the U.S.S.R.*—The committee reviewed the documents Oswald wrote about his life in the Soviet Union, including his diary and letters to his mother, Marguerite, and brother, Robert. (*12*) They paralleled, to a great extent, the information in documents provided to the Warren Commission by the Soviet Government after the assassination. (*13*) These documents were provided to the Commission in response to its request that the Soviet Government give the Commission any "available information concerning the activities of Lee Harvey Oswald during his residence from 1959 to 1962 in the Soviet Union, in particular, copies of any official records concerning him." (*14*)

Two sets of documents, totaling approximately 140 pages, were turned over to the Commission by the Soviets in November 1963 and in May 1964. (*15*) They were routine, official papers. None of them appeared to have come from KGB files, and there were no records of interviews of Oswald by the KGB, nor were there any surveillance reports. Unfortunately, the authenticity of the documents could not be established. The signatures of Soviet officials, for example, were illegible. (*16*)

Nevertheless, the Soviet documents and Oswald's own statements give this account of Oswald's stay in the Soviet Union:

He lived there from October 1959 to June 1962.

He attempted suicide on learning he would not be permitted to remain in the U.S.S.R.

He worked in a radio plant in Minsk.

He met and married Marina.

He was originally issued a residence visa for stateless persons and later issued a residence visa for foreigners.

He obtained exit visas for himself and his family before departing the Soviet Union.

Neither the documents nor Oswald's own statements indicate that he was debriefed or put under surveillance by the KGB.

The committee interviewed U.S. officials who specialize in Soviet intelligence, asking them what treatment they would have expected Oswald to have received during his defection. (*17*) For the most part, they suspected that Oswald would have routinely been debriefed by the KGB and that many persons who came in contact with Oswald in the U.S.S.R. would have been connected with the KGB. (*18*)

(2) *Treatment of defectors by the Soviet Government.*—The committee examined the CIA and FBI files on others who had defected in the same period as Oswald and who had eventually returned to the United States. (*19*) The purpose was to determine the frequency of KGB contact and whether the treatment of Oswald appeared to be significantly different from the norm. The defectors studied by the committee were selected because their backgrounds and other characteristics were similar to Oswald's, on the theory that their treatment by the KGB could be expected to parallel that of Oswald, if he was not a special case, a recruited assassin, for example.

The examination of the defector files was inconclusive, principally because the case of nearly every defector was unique. (*20*) In addition, the files available on the experiences of the defectors were often not adequate to extract meaningful data for the purpose of this investigation, since they were compiled for other reasons. (*21*) As to contacts with the KGB, the experiences of American defectors appeared to have varied greatly. Some reported daily contact with Soviet intelligence agents, while others did not mention ever having been contacted or debriefed. (*22*)

(3) *Yuri Nosenko.*—Of all the areas investigated by the committee with respect to possible Soviet involvement in the assassination, none seemed as potentially rewarding as an examination of statements made by KGB officers who had defected to the United States. In determining how the KGB treats American defectors, an ex-KGB officer would certainly be of great interest. In this regard, the committee had access to three such men, one of whom, Yuri Nosenko, claimed to possess far more than general information about American defectors.

In January 1964,[5] Nosenko, identifying himself as a KGB officer, sought asylum in the United States. (*23*) He claimed to have worked in the KGB Second Chief Directorate whose functions, in many respects, are similar to those of the FBI. (*24*) According to Nosenko, while working in 1959 in a KGB department dealing with American tourists, he learned of a young American who sought to defect to the Soviet Union. The American was Lee Harvey Oswald. (*25*)

Nosenko stated he had worked extensively on the Oswald case, and he provided the FBI and CIA with data pertaining to Oswald's request to defect and remain in the Soviet Union, the initial rejection of that request by the KGB, Oswald's suicide attempt and a subsequent decision to permit him to remain in Russia. (*26*) Although the KGB, according to Nosenko, was well aware of Oswald, it made no attempt to debrief or interview him. (*27*) Never was any consideration given by the KGB to enlist Oswald into the Soviet intelligence service. (*28*)

The committee was most interested in Nosenko's claim that in 1963, after Oswald was arrested in the assassination, he had an opportunity to see the KGB file on the suspected assassin. As a result, Nosenko said, he was able to state categorically that Oswald was not a Soviet agent and that no officer of the KGB had ever interviewed or debriefed him. (*29*)

Nosenko's testimony, however, did not settle the question of Soviet complicity in the assassination. From the time of his defection, some U.S. intelligence officers suspected Nosenko was on a disinformation mission to mislead the American Government. Since other CIA officials believed Nosenko was a bona fide defector, a serious disagreement at the top level of the Agency resulted. (*30*)

The Warren Commission found itself in the middle of the Nosenko controversy—and in a quandary of its own, since the issue of Nosenko's reliability bore significantly on the assassination investigation. (*31*) If he was telling the truth, the Commission could possibly write off Soviet involvement in a conspiracy.[6] If, on the other hand, Nosenko was lying, the Commission would be faced with a dilemma. While a deceitful Nosenko would not necessarily point to Soviet complicity, it would leave the issue in limbo. The Warren Commission

[5] Nosenko had first contacted the U.S. Government in June 1962.

[6] The Commission as well as the committee recognized that Nosenko could have been candid and that the connection between Oswald and the KGB could have been compartmentalized, that is, known only to a select few people, not including Nosenko.

chose not to call Nosenko as a witness or to mention him in its report, apparently because it could not resolve the issue of his reliability.(*32*)

The committee, on the other hand, reviewed all available statements and files pertaining to Nosenko.(*33*) It questioned Nosenko in detail about Oswald, finding significant inconsistencies in statements he had given the FBI, CIA and the committee.(*34*) For example, Nosenko told the committee that the KGB had Oswald under extensive surveillance, including mail interception, wiretap and physical observation. Yet, in 1964, he told the CIA and FBI there had been no such surveillance of Oswald.(*35*) Similarly, in 1964, Nosenko indicated there had been no psychiatric examination of Oswald subsequent to his suicide attempt, while in 1978 he detailed for the committee the reports he had read about psychiatric examinations of Oswald.(*36*)

The committee also found that the CIA had literally put Nosenko in solitary confinement from 1964 to 1968.(*37*) Strangely, while he was interrogated during this period, he was questioned very little about Oswald.(*38*) The Agency did not seem to realize Nosenko's importance to an investigation of the assassination. While Richard Helms, then the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans, did tell Chief Justice Warren about Nosenko, the Agency's interest in him seemed to be largely limited to its own intelligence-gathering problem: did the KGB send Nosenko to the United States to deceive the CIA on many matters, only one of them perhaps related to the assassination?(*39*)

In the end, the committee, too, was unable to resolve the Nosenko matter. The fashion in which Nosenko was treated by the Agency—his interrogation and confinement—virtually ruined him as a valid source of information on the assassination. Nevertheless, the committee was certain Nosenko lied about Oswald—whether it was to the FBI and CIA in 1964, or to the committee in 1978, or perhaps to both.(*40*) The reasons he would lie about Oswald range from the possibility that he merely wanted to exaggerate his own importance to the disinformation hypothesis with its sinister implications.

Lacking sufficient evidence to distinguish among alternatives,[7] the committee decided to limit its conclusion to a characterization of Nosenko as an unreliable source of information about the assassination, or, more specifically, as to whether Oswald was ever contacted, or placed under surveillance, by the KGB.

(4) *Opinions of other defectors.*—In addition to interviewing Nosenko, the committee questioned two other former KGB officers who had defected to the United States. While neither could base an opinion on any personal experience with that part of the KGB in which Nosenko said he had served, both said that Oswald would have been of interest to the Soviet intelligence agency, that he would have been debriefed and that he may have been kept under surveillance.(*41*)

(5) *Marina Oswald.*—The committee not only considered a possible connection between Oswald and the KGB, it also looked into charges that his widow, Marina, was an agent of the KGB, or that she at least influenced her husband's actions in the assassination on orders from

[7] Beyond those reasons for falsification that can be attributed to Nosenko himself, there has been speculation that the Soviet Government, while not involved in the assassination, sent Nosenko on a mission to allay American fears. Hence, while his story about no connection between Oswald and the KGB might be false, his claim of no Soviet involvement in the assassination would be truthful.

Soviet officials. The committee examined Government files on Marina, it questioned experts on Soviet affairs and former KGB officers, and it took testimony from Marina herself.(*42*) The committee could find no evidence to substantiate the allegations about Marina Oswald Porter.

Mrs. Porter testified before the committee that Oswald had never been contacted directly by the KGB, though she assumed that he and she alike had been under KGB surveillance when they lived in the Soviet Union.

(6) *Response of the Soviet Government.*—Finally, the committee attempted to obtain from the Soviet Government any information on Oswald that it had not provided to the Warren Commission. In response to a committee request relayed by the State Department, the Soviet Government informed the committee that all the information it had on Oswald had been forwarded to the Warren Commission.(*43*)

The committee concluded, however, that it is highly probable that the Soviet Government possessed information on Oswald that it has not provided to the U.S. Government. It would be the extensive information that most likely was gathered by a KGB surveillance of Oswald and Marina while they were living in Russia. It is also quite likely that the Soviet Government withheld files on a KGB interview with Oswald.[8]

(d) Summary of the evidence

Its suspicions notwithstanding, the committee was led to believe, on the basis of the available evidence, that the Soviet Government was not involved in the assassination. In the last analysis, the committee agreed with the testimony of former Secretary of State Dean Rusk. To wit, there is no evidence that the Soviet Government had any interest in removing President Kennedy, nor is there any evidence that it planned to take advantage of the President's death before it happened or attempted to capitalize on it after it occurred. In fact, the reaction of the Soviet Government as well as the Soviet people seemed to be one of genuine shock and sincere grief. The committee believed, therefore, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that the Soviet Government was not involved in the assassination.

2. THE COMMITTEE BELIEVES, ON THE BASIS OF THE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO IT, THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

When the leader of a great nation is assassinated, those initially suspected always include his adversaries. When President John F. Kennedy was struck down by rifle fire in Dallas in November 1963, many people suspected Cuba and its leader, Fidel Castro Ruz, of involvement in the assassination, particularly after it was learned that Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin, had sought to travel to Cuba in September 1963.(*1*) To evaluate those suspicions properly, it is

[8] The committee concluded that it should not necessarily be inferred from the failure of the Soviet Government to cooperate with the committee that it was involved in the assassination. Just as agencies of the U.S. intelligence community are reluctant to share their confidential files, a similar response might be expected to come from the KGB. The Soviet Government, it could be argued, would have little to gain and much to lose by turning over its files. While the committee recognized the logic of this argument, it regretted that the Soviet Government, in the interest of historical truth, did not cooperate.